

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-4 (cancelled).

5. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering which is assembled in a steering shaft of a vehicle and in which a male shaft and a female shaft are fitted for relative telescopic movement and for torque transmission therebetween, characterized in that:

a respective cylindrical member is disposed in at least one first set of accommodating portions being formed by a first pair of axially extending grooves formed respectively on an outer peripheral surface of said male shaft and on an inner peripheral surface of said female shaft, said cylindrical member having an axis that extends along an axial direction of said telescopic shaft, and said cylindrical member gradually decreasing in outer diameter from a central portion toward each of its end portions along the axial direction; and

a respective rolling member is disposed in at least one second set of accommodating portions being formed by a

second pair of axially extending grooves formed respectively on the outer peripheral surface of said male shaft and on the inner peripheral surface of said female shaft, said rolling member being radially biased.

6. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 5, wherein said cylindrical member is crowned.

7. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 5, wherein the outer diameter of said cylindrical member is tapered in a vicinity of each end portion of said cylindrical member.

8. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 5, wherein said cylindrical member is a needle roller.

9. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 5, wherein an axial length of said cylindrical member, between said central portion and an end portion over which said outer diameter gradually decreases, is between 0.1 and 0.25 times an overall axial length of said cylindrical member.

10. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering which is assembled in a steering shaft of a vehicle and in which a male shaft and a female shaft are fitted for relative telescopic movement and for torque transmission therebetween, characterized in that:

a respective cylindrical member is disposed in at least one first set of accommodating portions being formed by a first pair of axially extending grooves formed respectively on an outer peripheral surface of said male shaft and on an inner peripheral surface of said female shaft, said cylindrical member having an axis that extends along an axial direction of said telescopic shaft, and said cylindrical member having frustoconical portions decreasing in outer diameter from a central portion of said cylindrical member toward each of its end portions, respectively, along the axial direction; and

a respective rolling member is disposed in at least one second set of accommodating portions being formed by a second pair of axially extending grooves formed respectively on the outer peripheral surface of said male shaft and on the inner peripheral surface of said female shaft, said rolling member being radially biased.

11. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 10, wherein said end portions are radiused and each said frustoconical portion extends from said central portion to the corresponding end portion.

12. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 10, wherein said cylindrical member is crowned.

13. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 10, wherein the outer diameter of said cylindrical member is tapered in a vicinity of each end portion of said cylindrical member.

14. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 10, wherein said cylindrical member is a needle roller.

15. (new) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 10, wherein an axial length of each frustoconical portion is between 0.1 and 0.25 times an overall axial length along said axis of said cylindrical member.